

To: Field, Stephen[Field.Stephen@epa.gov]
From: Flickinger, Nancy (ENRD)
Sent: Fri 1/10/2014 3:48:00 PM
Subject: FW: Emailing: West Virginia chemical spill triggers widespread tap water ban - chicagotribune.com.htm

Hi steve -- FYI -- assume you know about this but let us know if you need anything from us.

From: Brook, Bob (ENRD)
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 10:39 AM
To: Flickinger, Nancy (ENRD)
Subject: FW: Emailing: West Virginia chemical spill triggers widespread tap water ban - chicagotribune.com.htm

From: McIlwain, David (ENRD)
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Brook, Bob (ENRD)
Subject: FW: Emailing: West Virginia chemical spill triggers widespread tap water ban - chicagotribune.com.htm

After correction by Lori.

From: McIlwain, David (ENRD)
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 10:22 AM
To: Friedman, Henry (ENRD); Jonas, Lori (ENRD)
Subject: Emailing: West Virginia chemical spill triggers widespread tap water ban - chicagotribune.com.htm

Chicago Tribune

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Faucet (Joe Raedle / Getty Images)

Mary Wisniewski and Eric M. Johnson Reuters

7:09 a.m. CST, January 10, 2014

(Reuters) - - President Barack Obama issued an emergency declaration for the state of West Virginia on Friday, ordering federal aid in the aftermath of a chemical spill that has left up to 300,000 people without tap water, closed schools and businesses.

The spill of 4-Methylcyclohexane Methanol, a chemical used in the coal industry, occurred Thursday on the Elk River in Charleston, West Virginia's capital and largest city, upriver from the eastern U.S. state's largest water treatment plant.

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin declared a state of emergency for nine counties and health officials have advised residents to use tap water only for flushing toilets and fighting fires.

"West Virginians in the affected service areas are urged not to use tap water for drinking, cooking, washing or bathing," Gov. Tomblin said in a statement. "Right now, our priorities are our hospitals, nursing homes and schools."

Emergency workers were transporting water to distribution centers in the affected counties, according to the Charleston Gazette.

Local media showed pictures of residents lining up at stores for bottled water and shelves emptied of their supplies.

At a Kroger supermarket in Kanawha City, a Charleston police officer stood guard as shoppers stocked up on bottled water.

"People have been grabbing it like crazy," Kerstin Halstead told the newspaper as she loaded two cases of water into her SUV. "Some people were getting - well, they could have shared more."

POTENTIALLY HARMFUL

Dr. Rahul Gupta, health officer for the Kanawha-Charleston and the Putnam County Health Departments, ordered the closure of all restaurants and schools receiving water from the West Virginia American Water company.

Schools would be shut on Friday across many counties, including Boone, Cabell, Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Pocahontas and Putnam, the West Virginia Department of Education said on its website.

Tomblin's spokeswoman, Amy Shuler Goodwin, said she did not know when the ban would be lifted.

The spill originated with Freedom Industries, a Charleston company, according to Laura Jordan, external affairs manager for West Virginia American Water.

It occurred above the intake of the Kanawha Valley water treatment plant in Charleston, which serves 100,000 homes and businesses, or 250,000 to 300,000 people, Jordan said.

"It could be potentially harmful if swallowed and could potentially cause skin and eye irritation," Jordan said.

The West Virginia Department of Environment Protection got a report of a strange odor on Thursday morning and visited the Freedom Industries site, where they found a leaking storage unit, Shuler Goodwin said.

Jordan said the water company and state environmental officials were conducting tests on the water.

The company is working with state and federal authorities to get residents access to bottled water, and water distribution sites will be announced through local media, Jordan said.

A representative for Freedom Industries did not respond to requests for comment.

The company says on its website it is a producer of specialty chemicals for the mining, steel and cement industries.

(Reporting by Mary Wisniewski in Chicago and Eric M. Johnson in Seattle; Editing by Eric Walsh and Stephen Powell)

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